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BOOKS ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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During the year 1910 several million Sunday-school boys and girls, ministers, parents, and teachers of America will be studying the Gospel of Matthew, under the direction of the International Lesson Committee's uniform system. There will be those who wish to study this scripture book historically, systematically, and thoroughly. Some of the books suitable for this purpose may be named and characterized. They may be arranged in four groups:

1. *Commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew*.—The latest commentary on Matthew is by the English scholar, Rev. Alfred Plummer, D.D., entitled *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (Scribner's, New York, 1909, pp. 497, \$3). Probably this new book is for general purposes the best large commentary on Matthew in English;¹ it is full, conservative, devout, scholarly, and useful for the earnest Bible student. One might have supposed that the volume on Matthew in the International Critical Commentary series would be the best commentary on Matthew in English. And so it might have been if Rev. W. C. Allen, the author, had presented us with a general commentary on the Gospel. Instead, when his book appeared, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (Scribners, New York, 1907, pp. 434, \$3) it was seen to be a work upon the literary criticism of the Gospel, with but a small amount of historical and exegetical treatment. Certainly such a study of the First Gospel was needed, and it was admirably done; but a work upon such lines could not serve a large public whose Bible-study is unspecialized. This statement is necessary concerning Allen's commentary because all the other volumes of the series to which it belongs are general and widely useful commentaries.

Until these two books appeared within the last two years, the

¹ The great commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew in German are by B. Weiss, H. J. Holtzmann, and Th. Zahn.

English reader had been dependent upon the much older books by the American scholar, Dr. J. A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1887, pp. 610, \$2), and the Scottish scholar, Dr. James Morison, *Practical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1st ed. 1870; 9th ed. 1895; pp. 674, 14s.). Both of these extensive books were designed for homiletical use, and continue to be valuable for the devotional and practical study of Matthew. The historical and critical problems of the Gospel may be better studied elsewhere; even Plummer's commentary leaves some things to be desired in this direction.

Of the small commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, two may be mentioned: Carr, *Commentary on St. Matthew*, in the Cambridge Bible series (Macmillan, New York, \$1); and Slater, *Commentary on St. Matthew*, in the New-Century Bible series (Henry Frowde, New York, 90 cts.). Both are excellent little books, the latter of them the more recent.

2. *The Life of Jesus*.—One wishes in studying either of the four gospels to study the life of Jesus comprehensively. Commentaries are not written to present Jesus in this way, so the student of Matthew will need a Life of Jesus in addition. First, with regard to the large works on this subject. Of the older and conservative treatises in English one may name as most useful: Weiss, *The Life of Christ* (Scribners, New York, 1883-89, 3 vols., \$6.75), a fine historical work, in some respects still the best; and Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1887, 2 vols., \$2), which is full of local color and religious fervor. More recently the most important book is by Oscar Holtzmann, *The Life of Jesus* (Macmillan, New York, 1904, pp. 556, \$4). If one is looking for a modern critical and historical treatment of the life of Jesus, scholarly, progressive, and reasonable, Holtzmann's book is probably the best; but it must be said that there is much disagreement among the present interpreters of Jesus, and as yet no book can be counted final or entirely satisfactory. Along with Holtzmann may stand the sketch by Bousset entitled *Jesus* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1906, pp. 211, \$1.25), one of the best books to present in brief compass the moderate progressive interpretation of Jesus; students will do

well to read Bousset in order to observe his historical point of view and method, as well as his conclusions.

The popular books upon the Life of Jesus, designed for class-study and general reading, are numerous. Among them perhaps three should here be named: Sanday, *Outlines of the Life of Christ* (Scribners, New York, 1908, pp. 241, \$1), an exceedingly good résumé of the life, times, and teaching of Jesus, by the foremost New Testament scholar of England; it is historical, reverential, and illuminating. Burton and Mathews, *Constructive Studies in the Life of Christ* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 5th ed., 1904, pp. 300, \$1), a work arranged for systematic study of all the gospel material, scholarly and conservative, of great value for individual and class use. And David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh* (A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, 3d ed., 1906, pp. 549, \$2.50), a spirited, engaging, conservative, and devout account of Jesus' ministry. For a single-volume account of the Jewish people in Jesus' day, an excellent book is by Morrison, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 3d ed., 1893, pp. 426, \$1.50).

3. *The Teaching of Jesus*.—The Gospel of Matthew is especially interested in what Jesus taught, presenting in five great discourse sections the fullest account we have of his words; not a small amount of this material is found in this gospel only. The study of the First Gospel is for this reason chiefly concerned with Jesus' teaching. Commentaries interpret the teachings verse by verse. One needs also a collective and unifying treatment of the teaching. This one finds in special books upon the subject. The greatest exposition of Jesus' whole message is given by Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Scribners, New York, 1892, 2 vols., \$5); it is comprehensive, orderly, clear, scholarly, conservative, and in the highest degree useful. Next to this, with similar qualities but in much briefer compass, is the fine little book by Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Macmillan, New York, 1902, pp. 190, \$1). All Bible students are earnestly urged to use one of these two books in their study of the Gospel of Matthew. For the Sermon on the Mount one may name: Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount* (John Murray, London, 1899, pp. 218, 3s. 6d.); and my article entitled "The Sermon on the Mount" in the Extra Volume (pp. 1-45), of Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

4. *History and Criticism of the Gospel*.—The origin of the Gospel of Matthew in the first (or early second) century A. D., and its relation to the gospels of Mark and Luke, is an interesting problem in the history of primitive Christianity, intricate and difficult to solve. Of still greater importance is the problem of the historical trustworthiness of the account of Jesus' life and teaching as contained in this gospel. These fundamental matters are dealt with chiefly in books which are called "Introductions to the New Testament." Three large works are here to be named, all of them by German scholars in English translations: Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Scribners, New York, 1909, 3 vols., \$12), a massive production, conservative, learned, and useful; the discussion of the Gospel of Matthew is in chap. ix (II, 367-716). Jülicher, *Introduction to the New Testament* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1904, pp. 658, \$4.50), a single-volume work of fine scholarship, progressive spirit, concise, thorough, and highly instructive; all things considered, Jülicher's book is probably the best single work upon the subject; the discussion of the Gospel of Matthew is in pp. 292-383. The third work is by Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1906-9, 2 vols., \$6); a work of first importance, independent, radical, thorough, competent, suggestive; the discussion of the Gospel of Matthew is in Vol. II, chaps. xi-xvii.

In speaking of these books, the fact-seeking student of the Bible has been in mind. Those who are prepared to deal with the historical and critical questions of the New Testament are advised to read such books as have been here mentioned. One will observe that the task of historically interpreting the New Testament is a work on which many have spent and others are spending their lives without completing their undertaking; and that patient research, breadth of judgment, modesty of opinion, and willingness to recognize uncertainties, are necessary qualities in the Bible student. Meanwhile, the moral and religious value of the New Testament, and in this case particularly of the Gospel of Matthew, is full, clear, free, and vital to those who will study the book with an earnest and devout spirit.